

**(Washington, DC)** Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) condemned the plan by the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida to burn copies of the Quran to mark the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>:

“The downright racism behind this hate-filled organization’s threat to burn copies of the Quran is disgraceful to American values. The issue here is not our coveted right of free speech; the issue is American values. Hate is hate and this is free speech running amuck. It is irresponsible to hide behind the First Amendment and knowingly put our U.S. military in harm’s way.

“Not only do I condemn these proposed actions for their complete disrespect to the Islamic religion, but I condemn these actions for their potential to incite further violence and hate crimes. The powerfully offensive images of burning the Islamic holy book will undoubtedly cause anger and riots, and are sure to be used by extremists to build anti-American sentiment around the world, potentially putting our men and women in uniform in jeopardy.

“The actions of a small group of people can skew the image of America into a country breeding hate and intolerance. In 1821, the German philosopher Heinrich Heine famously foreshadowed the horrors of the Nazi regime in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: ‘Where they burn books, they will ultimately also burn people.’ Should this event take place this weekend, it has the potential to create unintentional consequences and portray a false image that our country’s values are not what they once were.

“The idea that this in some way will memorialize the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks is misguided. Those attacks showed us the damage that hate can cause. You cannot fight fire with fire, nor hate with hate. If this hate-filled organization makes the mistake of following through with this threat to burn copies of the Quran, I hope my colleagues in Congress will join me in condemning this event. I have always dedicated my efforts to combating religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic rhetoric. There is no excuse for such hateful behavior and I will continue to work toward eradicating all forms of hatred wherever it occurs.”

If the event moves forward this weekend, Hastings plans to introduce a resolution next week condemning the burning of the copies of the Quran by the Dove World Outreach Center on

September 11<sup>th</sup> as well as the associated anti-Islamic bigotry it represents.

*Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.*

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